

Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585 June 4, 1987

MM

MEMORANDUM FOR:

John Rudolph

Director of Program Support

Office of Military Application

FROM:

F. Berndt Schine

Acting Director

Intergovernmental Affairs

SUBJECT:

Radiological Monitoring Review

in the Marshall Islands

The National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences has forwarded the attached correspondence for Department of Energy review and comment.

Since your office is the DOE/HQ program focal point for radiological monitoring of affected people in the Marshall Islands, your cooperation in preparing a response to the National Research Council is appreciated.

Please review the attached correspondence and provide appropriate comments to me by June 10, 1987. I will then prepare a letter to the National Research Council on behalf of the Department. Any future correspondence I receive concerning this matter will also be forwarded for your consideration.

Attachment

DOE John Ruddphis Filos D-File Haushall Islands 1987



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS 96960 CABLE: REPMAR

May 12, 1987

Mr. John S. Sieg Senior Staff Officer Board on Radioactive Waste Management National Research Council 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20418

Dear Mr. Sieg:

I have just returned to Majuro after two weeks of travel and found waiting for me your thoughtful letter of April 24. In order to contact you prior to the May 19 meeting of the National Research Council Governing Board, I am sending this brief response. The suggestions and offer of assistance regarding the radiological studies are deeply appreciated.

At this time, the Government of the Marshall Islands is not in a position to formally request that the National Research Council Governing Board establish a panel to undertake the Rongelap assessment. Government of the Marshall Islands and the people of Rongelap have begun discussions with Dr. Henry I. Kohn, Chairman of the Bikini Atoll Rehabilitation Committee (BARC), with a view of contracting him and other scientists of BARC to review the data and conclusions of the U.S. Department of Energy. (BARC was established at the request of the U.S. Congress, in House Report 99-450, to report independently on the feasibility and cost of rehabilitating Bikini Atoll, which, like Rongelap, is located in the Marshall Islands.) Dr. Kohn and other members of BARC would have the advantages of familiarity with the history of the U.S. Nuclear Testing Program and the unique geography of the Marshall Islands and an established credibility with the U.S. Congress. The obvious disadvantage, of great concern to some of the Rongelap people, is that they may be perceived as having collaborated too closely with U.S. Department of Energy scientists. Officials of my government will be meeting with the Rongelap Council within the next few weeks to determine whether or not the project will be awarded to Dr. Kohn and his colleagues.

Mr. John S. Sieg May 12, 1987

Page 2

If we cannot agree on the suitability of Dr. Kohn for performing the Rongelap assessment, then it is quite possible that we would seek assistance from the National Research Council. It is also possible that the Government of the Marshall Islands would request your assistance with the more extensive medical surveillance and radiological monitoring required by the Compact of Free Association (U.S. Public Law 99-239). Should technical assistance be sought from the National Research Council for either project, you will receive a formal indication of interest from my government.

I wish to thank you again for the time and thought you have already given to the situation in the Marshall Islands; they are evident in your generous offer of assistance. It is reassuring to know that the National Research Council might be available to help with the two radiological studies.

Sincerely yours,

Peter N. Oliver Special Assistant, Compact Implementation

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

COMMISSION ON PHYSICAL SCIENCES, MATHEMATICS, AND RESOURCES

2101 Constitution Avenue Washington D C 20418

BOARD ON RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT (202) 334-3066 OFFICE LOCATION

JOSEPH MENRY BUILDING

J ST STREET AND

PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE N. W.

April 24, 1987

Mr. Peter N. Oliver
Special Assistant
Compact Implementation
Republic of the Marshall Islands
P.O. Box 15
Majuro
Marshall Islands 96960

Dear Mr. Oliver:

Thank you very much for your letter of 13 April 1987; it is a privilege to be consulted in this matter.

It appears to me that there are two substantially different requirements: in the case of Rongelap, the need is for an independent review of existing Department of Energy (DOE) data and conclusions concerning island habitability, followed by the preparation of an authoritative report to the government of the Marshall Islands, the U.S. Congress and the President; in the case of the Section 1(e) project, the subsequent activities in the event the existing data are judged inadequate or incomplete, the data remain to be gathered—and the gathering is the immediate objective. In my opinion, two different types of contractor are called for.

In the first case, it is paramount that the review be by a technically competent, unbiased, and credible team--but, if the appropriate team participants are assembled and if the DOE work has been conducted properly, relatively little field work or generation of raw data should be necessary. The team charge would be to determine whether the necessary types and amount of data were obtained, whether the data were accurate, and whether the data were suitably evaluated. Team selection would be a critical factor, with attention required to member disciplines, professional stature, and freedom from conflicts of interest (i.e., they should not be personally impacted by the results of data evaluation.) Finally, the report must be of convincing quality; the liklihood of its acceptance by the disparate groups must be maximized, whether they be the islanders contemplating the return to their homes, their government, the Department of Energy staff and managers responsible for data accumulation, the Congress, or the President of the United States. While the most important factor in report acceptance is obviously the competence of the preparation team, it is of almost equal importance that the report undergo the discipline

of review by a qualified and objective peer group prior to its acceptance and release.

In the second case, the establishment of the Marshall Islands data base, all of the review and evaluation considerations of the Rongelap effort may eventually apply, but only after the data have been gathered and provisionally interpreted. In order to enhance credibility, and because a different mix of personnel will be required, the organization gathering and interpreting the data initially should clearly not be the one conducting the subsequent review and evaluation. I regret that I am not in a position to recommend an organization to carry out the field work. A critical question is whether the work that has been done to date by or for DOE appears to be satisfactory. If it does, the previously used group may be the most logical one to continue.

Regarding the review and evaluation effort, there are a number of excellent people who might be willing to evaluate the data or give you advice if you elect to approach the problem on an individual basis. You might want to contact Merril Eisenbud; John Harley; John Till, or Ward Whicker. If available, experts of this type could probably react rapidly, and they are well known in their field. An alternative that you may wish to consider, if time is not critically limited, is to ask the National Research Council (NRC) to establish a panel for the Rongelap effort. If the NRC would undertake the assignment, a competent panel of experts from the necessary disciplines would be assembled, and the credibility of the report should be assured. As you probably know. the NRC is a private, non-profit, organization charged with providing technical advice to the government upon request. While mainly advising the government of the United States, it has occasionally advised other governments and non-government groups--a copy of a fairly recent report to the government of Sweden is enclosed, along with a brochure containing general information about the NRC, for information. Panel studies usually cost several hundred thousand dollars to conduct (although the members are volunteers, direct costs and those associated with the provision of staff support are reimbursed) and require on the order of two years after contract award to complete. If the Rongelap data are in good form and readily available, less time might be required. The NRC limits its involvement to scientific and technical matters; it does not make value judgements on, for instance, whether a proposed problem resolution is "fair" or "safe enough." It would, of course, address whether or not waste management techniques, radionuclide measurements, and the estimated biological effects based upon them were technically valid.

I do not know of other groups that are clearly in a position to perform the review and evaluation work. The National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements might be willing to establish such an overview group, as might the National Institutes of Health if you wanted to consider a U.S. government organization.

The Board on Radioactive Waste Management (BRWM) of the National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences has performed this kind of service on a number of occasions in the past and, should the Government of the Marshall Islands (GMI) so desire, might be willing to undertake the present review. If GMI is interested in NRC involvement, the following steps would need to be accomplished:

- 1) Indication of interest by GMI in having NRC propose to do the review.
- 2) Approval by The NRC Governing Board of the request and authorization for BRWM to prepare a proposal to GMI.
- 3) A BRWM staff officer (probably the undersigned) would meet with you at Majuro and visit Rongelap to determine the specific details necessary for scoping and drafting a proposal for the review.
- 4) Submission of the draft proposal resulting from the visit to the NRC Governing Board for approval--after which it is transmitted to GMI for approval.
- 5) If accepted by GMI, a contract would be negotiated and, upon execution, a panel of specialists would be assembled and work would begin.

It is probable that several NRC groups would be involved in the identification and assembly of the appropriate specialists. I am persuaded, however, by the ¹³⁷Cs body burden data for 1982/3 that the techniques applied to the management of radioactive wastes are worthy of particular scrutiny.

Inasmuch as we are a non-profit organization and the visit is not fundable under existing contracts, it would be necessary for your government or other affected organizations to defray our direct travel costs; no charge would be made for proposal preparation time. These costs should approximate \$3900.00, almost three-quarters of which are for air fare.

In closing, let me say again that I welcome the opportunity to offer assistance, and hope that what I have provided will be of help. In response to the urgency expressed in your letter to me, we plan to bring your request to the attention of our Governing Board; they will consider the matter at their meeting on 19th May. Please note that all the steps and actions listed above after Step (1) are contingent upon the favorable consideration by the NRC Governing Board in Step (2). If you could advise us of your interest (Step 1 above) before the 19th, we

would be able to either report your interest to the Governing Board in connection with Step 2 or, if you are not interested in proceeding, withdraw the matter from Governing Board consideration. Accordingly, your early reply will be much appreciated.

John S. Sieg

Senior Staff Officer

Enc. A Review of the Swedish KBS-3 Plan for Final Storage of Spent Nuclear Fuel

General Information for Members of Committees

Listing of Individual Addresses

Addresses

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John Harley c/o U.S. Department of Energy Environmental Measures Laboratory 376 Hudson Street New York City, N.Y. 10014

John Till Rt. 2 Box 122 Neeses, S.C. 29107

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REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS 96960 CABLE: REPMAR

April 6, 1987

Mr. John Sieg Senior Staff Officer Board of Radioactive Waste Management National Academy of Scientists 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20418

Dear Mr. Sieg:

I am writing to seek your assistance in identifying an individual or organization to undertake a review of data collected by the United States Department of Energy and the resulting conclusions concerning radiation levels and other conditions at Rongelap Atoll in the Marshall Islands. The scope of this project is spelled out in Section 103(i) of United States Public Law 99-239: the organization performing the review will determine if the data is adequate and supports the conclusions reached by the Department of Energy. Inasmuch as the people of Rongelap Atoll have abandoned their homeland in fear of residual radiation, it is a matter of some urgency to my government that an evaluation of the findings of the Department of Energy be performed in the near future.

A member of the staff of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, which initiated much of the legislation that has given relief to the communities in the Marshall Islands that were affected by the U.S. Nuclear Testing Program, has referred me to you as a person who could recommend scientists or scientific organizations qualified to conduct the Rongelap assessment or could forward my inquiry to the appropriate individual. The acientists or organizations need not be American.

A related project, but much more extensive in scope, will be the medical surveillance and radiological monitoring activities that the Government of the Marshall Islands will carry out pursuant to Section 1(e) of Article II of the Section 177 Agreement. My government views its responsibility under this section to be the establishment of a data base of medical information and a survey of the physical conditions of the atolls

Mr. John Sieg

Page 2

affected by the U.S. Nuclear Testing Program. Such information would be available to inform the determinations of a Claims Tribunal which will have jurisdiction over all claims relating to the Nuclear Testing Program. Again, I would be interested in your recommendations of scientific organizations to conduct the surveillance and monitoring required by this section of the Section 177 Agreement.

Enclosed are copies of the legislation and diplomatic agreement which describe the two radiological studies which my government has agreed to undertake. I shall be most grateful for your recommendations regarding these two projects.

Sincerely yours.

Parate Plane

Peter N. Oliver Special Assistant Compact Implementation

Enclosures:

(1)Section 103(i) of P.L. 99-239

(2) Section 177 Agreement

Mailing Address:

P. O. Box 15

Majuro, Marshall Islands 96960